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Letter dated 31 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 29 January 2014, addressed to you by Mehmet Dânâ, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and the annex thereto could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 42, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Y. Halit **Çevik**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 31 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I would like to refer to the letter of the Greek Cypriot representative in New York, dated 6 December 2013 (S/2013/724), which contains unfounded allegations concerning the protection of cultural property in Northern Cyprus, specifically in reference to Saint Hilarion Castle situated in the Girne (Kyrenia) mountain range. In this regard, the letter of the Greek Cypriot representative contains a baseless claim that there are "significant dangers for the stability and integrity of [Saint Hilarion Castle]" as a result of "the continued operation of a shooting range of the Turkish occupation army" within the vicinity of the monument.

At the outset, it should be underlined that none of the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Cyprus describe the legitimate and justified Turkish intervention of 1974, undertaken in accordance with article 4 of the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960, as "invasion" or the subsequent presence of Turkish troops on the island as "occupation". Such allegations are nothing but pure Greek Cypriot forgery aimed at distorting the historical facts and realities of the island. In this context, it is imperative to recall the dramatic statement made before the Security Council on 19 July 1974 by Archbishop Makarios, the Greek Cypriot leader at the time, in which he openly accused Greece, not Turkey, of invading and occupying Cyprus. His remarks, which came only four days after the Greek junta's coup of 15 July 1974, are well-recorded in the annals of the United Nations and hardly require further elaboration.

As regards the allegations at hand, it should be stressed that the Turkish Cypriot side has always considered and treated the historic sites and monuments located in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as the common cultural heritage of humanity as a whole and has accordingly taken every precaution and step to ensure their protection and preservation. Saint Hilarion Castle is no exception in this regard. To elaborate more specifically on the realities pertaining to the allegations of the Greek Cypriot representative, I would like to clarify that the military zone in question is well over a kilometre away from the castle, totally falsifying the claim that it is 500 metres away, and thus poses no threat whatsoever to the stability or integrity of the castle. This is especially true given the rigorous standards of safety adhered to by the military. The letter of the Greek Cypriot representative also claims that there are "blasts and the possibility of explosives" at the site, which is completely false since there is no ammunition present at the said military site which fits this description.

By distorting the facts, the Greek Cypriot side has once again fabricated a false allegation in an attempt to mislead the international community so that it puts pressure on the Turkish Cypriot side and Turkey. Furthermore, it should be known that Saint Hilarion Castle is one of the most popular and oft-frequented tourist destinations in North Cyprus, and the Turkish Cypriot side would not do anything to jeopardize the monumental value of such a site or endanger visitors. To this day, there have been no complaints from either the tourists visiting the castle or the staff who are present at the site, pertaining to any military activity or disturbance, blasts or otherwise, in the region.

Contrary to Greek Cypriot rhetoric, in fact, it is the dire condition of the Turkish-Muslim historic sites and monuments located in South Cyprus that requires immediate attention. Today, it is an undeniable fact that most of the Turkish-Muslim cultural heritage located in the South has simply disappeared due to neglect and wilful destruction and, unfortunately, the remaining few are faced with a similar fate. Thus, as the Turkish Cypriot side, we call on the international community to do its utmost and remind the Greek Cypriot side of its obligations deriving from the relevant international legal instruments for the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage located in South Cyprus regardless of its origin.

It is clear that this is yet another futile attempt aimed at diverting attention from the Greek Cypriot intransigence and delaying tactics in relation to the efforts for a comprehensive settlement in Cyprus. It is imperative that the Greek Cypriot side discontinue such counter-productive policies and sincerely engage with its counterpart, the Turkish Cypriot side, for a fair and durable settlement in Cyprus. Moreover, it is noteworthy that while the search for a negotiated settlement to the Cyprus issue continues, the two sides have been cooperating on matters concerning the preservation of cultural heritage through the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage since its establishment in 2008. The Committee is comprised of members from the two sides as well as a United Nations facilitator.

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 42, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Mehmet **Dânâ**
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus